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ABSTRACT

A practicum was designed to increase the writing opportunities of 37 prekindergarten children in three classes through staff development. Formal and informal surveys of prekindergarten teachers confirmed the need for more information on child development, the development of the writing process, and prekindergarten whole language. A series of workshops were developed for the prekindergarten teachers on child development, whole language, portfolio assessment, and the development of the writing process. Other strategies included information brainstorming, organization of centers to provide writing opportunities, and acting as a resource person to provide support to teachers. Analysis of the data revealed the teachers had a better understanding of how the writing process developed and interrelated to language and reading. Through this understanding, writing opportunities increased in the prekindergarten classroom. (Contains 16 references and three tables of data. Teacher surveys, an observation form, a portfolio checklist, and outlines for a workshop on whole language, the development of writing, and portfolio assessment are attached.) (Author/RS)

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ED 371 375

Increasing Prekindergarten Children's Writing Opportunities Through Teacher Education

by

Barbara A. Pickle

Cluster 60

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A Practicum I Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

1994

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Barbara A. Pickle under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

July 26, 1994
Date of Final Approval of Report

Georgianna Lowen
Georgianna Lowen, Ed.D., Adviser

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT		iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS		iv
LIST OF TABLES		v
Chapter		
I	INTRODUCTION	1
	Description of Community	1
	Writer's Work Setting and Role	3
II	STUDY OF THE PROBLEM	5
	Problem Description.	5
	Problem Documentation.	7
	Causative Analysis	11
	Relationship of the Problem to the Literature.	12
III	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS.	16
	Goals and Expectations	16
	Expected Outcomes.	16
	Measurement of Outcomes.	17
IV	SOLUTION STRATEGY.	18
	Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions	18
	Description of Selected Solution	21
	Report of Action Taken	23
V	RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	30
	Results	30
	Discussion	32
	Recommendations	33
	Dissemination	34
REFERENCES.		35

Page

Appendices

A TEACHER SURVEY ON WORKSHOPS 38

B OBSERVATION OF PREKINDERGARTEN WRITING AND PRINT ENVIRONMENT 40

C PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST 43

D WORKSHOP ON WHOLE LANGUAGE 45

E MINIWORKSHOP ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING 50

F WORKSHOP ON PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT 53

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1 Responses to Teacher Survey 8

2 Checklist of Activities and Supplies Used in Learning Centers 10

3 Post-Implementation Checklist of Activities and Supplies Used in Learning Centers 31

ABSTRACT

Increasing Prekindergarten Children's Writing Opportunities Through Teacher Education. Pickle, Barbara, 1994: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Staff Development/Cognitive Development/ Whole Language/Prekindergarten Writing Skills

This practicum was designed to increase the writing opportunities of prekindergarten children through staff development. Formal and informal surveys of prekindergarten teachers confirmed the need for more information on child development, the development of the writing process, and prekindergarten whole language.

The writer developed a series of workshops for the prekindergarten teachers on child development, whole language, portfolio assessment, and the development of the writing process. Other strategies included information brainstorming, organization of centers to provide writing opportunities, and acting as a resource person to provide support to teachers.

Analysis of the data revealed the teachers had a better understanding of how the writing process developed and interrelated to language and reading. Through this understanding, writing opportunities increased in the prekindergarten classroom.

* * * *

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The community in which the worksetting was located is a city of approximately 80,000 in southeastern United States. The community is a young (30 years) master-planned city, made up of single and multifamily housing. It has a diverse and multifaceted economic market. The city is easily assessable by a major freeway system.

The population of the city consists primarily of families. The city is well known as a family-orientated community. The majority of the population have incomes in the middle to upper range. A variety of activities are provided to attract families. These include fine art activities, parks which provide many sports activities, libraries, and choices in education. Education is very important to the population of the city. Over the years, this community prided itself on its fine public educational institution; however, due to rapid growth and financial difficulties, the public system of education is overcrowded and understaffed.

The worksetting is an independent school in this suburban community. It is one of 16 public schools, and 3 private schools. It is the only nonsecular private school

in the city. The school is one of two schools operated by a major private university. The program was established to provide quality education for children in prekindergarten through the eighth grade. The goal of the school is to provide small class sizes, individual attention, and high academic standards for children of average through gifted ability. The active involvement of parents in the school makes it unique. Parents serve as volunteers in all areas of the school. Many volunteer hours were spent by parents in the classrooms, media area, fundraising, and in the advisory capacity on several boards. Fundraisers provided the school with many extras, such as a soccer field, bleachers, and a networked television system. Along with parent volunteers, university student observers and student teachers frequent the school.

The staff is made up of highly qualified teachers. They are active in participating in workshops. Many of the teachers have or are pursuing a master's or higher level degree. Staff turnover is low. The majority of the staff has 5 or more years of experience. Teacher-student ratio is 1 teacher to 15 students; with prekindergarten being 1 teacher to 8 students. Special teachers are available for art, music, physical education, and Spanish. The support staff consists of a nurse, resource teacher, enrichment teacher, speech and language teacher, and media specialist.

The staff has a commitment to improvement and providing the best education for each child. Parents, teachers, and administrators work together to obtain that goal. The school's climate is friendly and caring. Communication between parents, teachers, and administration is frequent and operative.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is the admissions coordinator for the school. The admission process involves tours for perspective families, interviews with parent and child, testing and assessment of children, and use of marketing strategies for the school. The writer's duties also include working closely with the prekindergarten staff to coordinate curriculum. Previous to this professional opportunity, the writer spent many years teaching, developing curriculum, and designing and implementing early childhood programs.

The curriculum for the early childhood children is developmentally appropriate for 3- to 5-year-old children. The staff provides an excellent environment for these children rich in language, social and emotional skills, gross motor, and cognitive development. Each room is set up with centers, and an interactive hands-on approach to learning is used. Children are involved in planning, implementing, and decision making on a daily basis. Equipment and toys for work and play are plentiful. Consumable supplies, books, and manipulatives are replaced

and added on a regular basis. Each team of teachers orders materials for the class and is responsible for a classroom budget.

For the implementation of the practicum, the writer worked with a staff of three prekindergarten teachers and two aides. The staff was responsible for two 4- to 5-year-old classes and one 3- to 4-year-old class. There was a total of 37 children.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The children in the prekindergarten area spent very little time in constructing meaningful writing. Isolated letter activities took up much of the center learning time. This, along with words of the day and words that begin with the letter of the day activities, left little time for experimentation with meaningful writing.

Hayes (1990) states children go through predictable stages in developing writing. Hayes also states if they have not had enough time to experiment with meaningful writing in any one of these stages, they can get stuck and stay in a stage longer than necessary. Children entering kindergarten without the experiences of writing and understanding language as a whole may not show curiosity or interest in the writing process. According to several studies, children from 3-5 years old begin to create symbols, and it is important to support and provide for this activity (Atkins, 1984).

Along with many opportunities to create meaningful writing, the children need exposure to print in their everyday environment. Miller (1991) feels the environment should be filled with print and used in every center in the

room. This includes signs, labels, charts, and a teacher who models using writing on a daily basis. It is also important for the teacher to interact with the children in writing and to provide extended activities.

The teachers must have a clear understanding of how children develop written communication skills and the importance of this early development. Like all human development, writing is sequential and the development of reading and writing are interrelated (Strickland, 1989). Teachers of young children must understand how language and writing experiences built on existing knowledge further communication skills.

Many difficulties were encountered in changing teachers' ideas about language and writing. Whole language curriculum was adapted by the school, however, many prekindergarten teachers used several parts of the curriculum but failed to see how it encompassed all areas of communication and curriculum. Art projects, some science, and a few math activities were incorporated into whole language themes. Very little of the rich writing experiences provided by the whole language curriculum was utilized by the preschool teachers. In conclusion, the prekindergarten children must have daily opportunities for meaningful writing and language experiences in an environment that is rich in print.

Problem Documentation

As the writer interacteed with the children and teachers in the classroom on a daily basis, there was evidence of the lack of integrated writing and print activities. The evidence was supported through observation, lack of documentation in planning, requests from teachers on workshops and information on writing, and parents asking questions about prereading and writing skills.

Teachers are required to submit a plan book once a week to an administrator. In reviewing these plan books, most of the activities supported the theme of letter of the week. Many activities promoted isolated letter learning and did not incorporate whole language and integrated writing experiences that is needed for prekindergarten children. Even the daily journal writing activity was not recorded in the plan books. There was a severe lack of hard copy planning in the plan books by the prekindergarten teachers.

To facilitate teacher growth and development, there was a great need for additional education. Through workshops and inservice training, teachers would gain new insights, develop enthusiasm, and be encouraged to try new ideas. A short poll (see Appendix A) was given to prekindergarten teachers at the school, and two out of three teachers wanted workshops on the writing process and whole language (see Table 1). Several other interests also included math and

science and how these subjects could be integrated into whole language.

Table 1

Responses to Teacher Survey

Workshop Topics	Responses		
	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C
Classroom Management	2	3	2
Music for Preschoolers	1	3	3
Art for Preschoolers	2	3	2
Woodworking	3	3	3
Self-Esteem	3	2	2
Whole Language and Precise Writing	1	3	1
Child Development Ages and Stages	1	1	2
Math Concepts	3	1	2
Science and Early Childhood	2	2	1
Math/Science Integrated with Whole Language	1	2	1

Note: Responses are based on 1 = most interested, 2 = interested, and 3 = not interested

Several teachers over the past 2 years had expressed an interest in articles and conferences on whole language. This writer had shared many articles with them on whole language over the past year. A need for a plan for

inservice training and workshops to facilitate the interest of teachers on this subject was recognized.

Parents are usually very interested in the child's education and are always the first teacher of the child. However, parents usually are not very knowledgeable about child development and often deal with their child's development in an emotional way. Parents need to be educated by the teachers about how the child develops and the importance of the early writing process and how it relates to future reading skills. Marzollo (1988) states parents must understand that the process of learning to read and write is ongoing and takes a long time. Parents have asked the teachers about the daily writing journals and requested information on what they could be doing at home to increase the child's writing skills. Several parents approached this writer with the requests of having teachers allow children who can write their names do so on daily papers. Parents needed examples of children's writings to be sent home by the teachers to develop a better understanding of their child's progress.

According to a checklist used with observation (see Appendix B), none of the teachers were using learning center time to enhance the writing process, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Checklist of Activities and Supplies Used in Learning Centers

Learning Center	Teachers A	B	C
BLOCKS			
paper/markers			
symbols			x
signs			
HOUSEKEEPING			
mag/newspaper			
paper/marker			
evirn. print		x	x
area changed			x
WRITING CENTER			
paper /markers	x	x	x
typewriter			x
stories	x	x	x
rich in print			
art/variety	x	x	x
write name			

In the block center, only one out of three teachers had labels on the blocks; none used signs or provided paper and markers for children to make signs. The housekeeping corner had environmental print in two out of three rooms; only one out of three teachers changed the housekeeping corner to a different dramatic play center. None of the housekeeping centers had magazines, newspapers, telephone pads, or telephone books in them. The writing centers were adequately equipped with three out of three teachers providing paper, markers, stories, and a variety of art

activities. All the teachers were writing the children's names on their daily papers and no room had a variety of print displayed.

Causative Analysis

The causes of the problem were a combination of factors and were varied. Lack of understanding of how the writing and reading process begins at birth by both the teachers and parents is one factor. Other causes were the lack of revision of our curriculum and the assumption on the part of school administrators that teachers know how children develop and are able to provide age appropriate writing activities.

Teachers have not had enough training in child development. The one or two classes that may be provided in teacher education courses does not give teachers the insight they need in child development for teaching a variety of age levels. Teachers of all age levels need to have a clear understanding of where the child has been to understand and know where the child is going. This takes a clear understanding and knowledge of human development. Administrators should not assume all teachers graduate with this knowledge. Workshops and inservice training must be provided on a regular basis in every school.

At the writers worksite, the curriculum has not been revised to include prekindergarten in the whole language curriculum. The prekindergarten teachers have a whole

language teachers' guide, but the written curriculum really does not identify whole language-based skills and objectives. The school must provide written guidelines for our early childhood teachers that are sequential, and the curriculum must intersect with the elementary school curriculum.

Teachers had been teaching letters in isolation for a long time. Each year the language program seems to be geared around the isolated letters of the alphabet and the art projects that go along with it. The teachers seemed comfortable with it. Few complaints were generated from parents, because parents could see and understand these activities directly related to the letters. Teachers found it easy to use the same plans each year. It was hard to try new things.

Relationship of the Problem to Literature

The literature suggests a strong correlation to the type of play children are engrossed in and the experimentation with language, both oral and written. Play is the child's vehicle for development and learning. As the child interacts in play, along with the support of a caring and understanding adult, the stage is set for the maximum learning environment. Play must be incorporated into all learning situations for young children. Williams and Kamii (1986) support the idea that children need developmentally appropriate, interactive, and hands-on play experiences for

learning. Through this play, cognitive learning will be facilitated. Prekindergarten programs must understand the developmental needs of 2-, 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds. Early childhood programs providing a kindergarten curriculum that is cut down for 3- to 5-year-olds is totally inappropriate. Smilansky and Shefatya (1990) also support an interactive environment for young children but stress that sociodramatic play enhances the child's development. Through sociodramatic play, children can experiment with the adult world of reality. Smilansky and Shefatya also feel that teachers must be trained in providing and extending sociodramatic play and must provide time in the classroom for this form of play.

Research literature for this practicum seemed unified on the fact that children need time to play. Learning of all sorts was done through play and drill, and rigid prereading and writing programs were inappropriate. Teale and Sulzby (1989) and Horste and Woodward (1989) implied that through this play and interaction in the home, children learn about oral and written language at a very young age, much before preschool or kindergarten. Often by the age of 2 or 3, children confidently know labels, symbols, and environmental print in their home. Horste and Woodward further state that children will make markings that look like their country's written language as early as 3 or 4 years old. Also, markings of children's names are distinct

and look different from self-portraits. Teale and Sulzby feel that writing improves reading skills, and literacy develops from the need to communicate.

As children develop communication through language and writing, they need the time and support of the adults around them. Children are still using play as the avenue for learning, but often the opportunities to engage in writing and language activities must be facilitated by the adult. Learning to read takes a lot of practice. With this practice, children may figure out how speech, reading, and writing work together. According to Schickedanz (1986) and Atkins (1984), children must figure out how print is related to language and how the reader will relate to what is written. To do this, children learn to create print through random scribbling, to letters like scribbling, and finally to written communication. Schickedanz also believes children can distinguish between story form and lists at an early age. Support of adults and time for writing efforts is always needed.

As with all other development, children go from whole to specific in language and writing. Whole language curriculum supports this development and provides for movement from the general development to more specific development. Curriculum that supports the child in play and interaction and allows time to practice skills also supports this development. Gurskey (1991) states children from birth

on look for ways to understand, and language develops from experiences. Gurskey also feels teaching young children to memorize words or isolated letters has very little meaning to them. The knowledge gained from research must be used to provide programs for young children. Children need time for rich extended play, integrated oral language, writing, and listening. Time must be provided for meaningful practice of skills in a supportive and caring environment.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum. The goal of this writer was to provide information and education to the teachers about literacy so teachers would have a better understanding of how children develop the writing process. In addition, the teachers would increase the prekindergarten children's writing opportunities.

Expected Outcomes

1. There will be a 50% increase in the amount of print in the classroom. This will be evident by the written lesson plans collected each week.

2. Additional learning centers will be provided on a weekly basis to enhance literacy in the classroom. This will be evident by a 50% increase of activities as reflected in the observational checklist and through this writer's observation. An increase of centers in the weekly lesson plans will also be evident.

3. Inquiries from parents about whole language and the writing process will decrease. This will be evident by portfolios prepared by the teachers. Through the portfolio,

teachers will provide parents with a better understanding of the goals of the program and the child's progress.

Measurement of Outcomes

The outcomes were to be measured by an observational checklist designed by the writer (see Appendix B). The post-observation was to be the same as the pre-observation. The writer was concerned about measuring teacher understanding of the use of learning centers to develop language and writing skills. The observational checklist was chosen as a good tool for use in a prekindergarten classroom. This tool provided the writer with many areas of comparison in learning centers and allowed for a variety in length of time in the classroom. The writer was to check plan books to see if planning for centers and daily activities incorporated the writing process.

The writer was to keep a journal log to document expected and unexpected events. The journal would provide classroom observations, successes, and activities that were not as successful. The journal would provide a running account of the practicum implementation.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem was that prekindergarten children need daily opportunities for meaningful language and writing experiences in an environment that is rich in print. Research supports the theory that children need many opportunities to see print, adults to model print, and time to use writing in a meaningful way (Atkins, 1984; Hayes, 1990; Horste & Woodward, 1989; Teale & Sulzby, 1989).

Atkins (1984) feels children need to see a lot of writing and written words along with time to develop the writing process. Atkins also believes writing is a sequential developmental process. Hayes (1990) supports this and also states that if children are not given enough opportunity and time to use, write, and see print, they could get stuck in any one area of development for a period longer than necessary. Teale and Sulzby (1989) state that children construct literacy through use and active participation. In young children, writing and reading are communication skills that are interrelated and develop together. Horste and Woodward (1989) support the need for opportunities to write and time for exploration. Horste and Woodward also feel that children arrive at school (3-5 years

old) with a lot of knowledge about oral and written language. Teachers and schools must build on these experiences to further language/writing development.

The importance of enough time and opportunities to use writing must be looked at in a classroom climate that is conducive to learning for a young child. It is very important to always provide developmentally appropriate curriculum and activities to support the curriculum. Techniques that are not appropriate for young children include passive sitting, lots of paper-and-pencil work, dittos, and rote memory drills. Cervantes (1992) and Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1992) go on to say, along with developmentally appropriate curriculum, the classroom must provide a feeling of a sense of safety, both intellectually and physically. Teachers help children so they are not frustrated but also allow for independence. Teachers need to talk less and listen more. Good early childhood programs must be appropriate for the age of the child and have a safe, healthy environment. Schickedanz et al. (1990) clarify what was needed in the environment even further. A study of children's home-based literacy compared to school-based literacy supported that the environment should be modeled more like the home. Home-based activities were more meaningful; usually the child initiated them and a warm relationship between adult and child existed. This type of environment promoted children's learning.

Research provided ideas and solutions that were developmentally appropriate for 3- to 5-year-olds in most skill areas. Narrowing down the search to look at programs and research that dealt with the writing process proved varied and exciting. Miller (1991) and Marzollo (1988) provided many activities that could be incorporated into the child's environment that promoted writing in a meaningful way. These suggestions assumed that the use of learning centers were already in operation in the room: in the housekeeping areas, adding such items as telephone books, note pads for messages, newspapers, magazines, and books; and changing the housekeeping corner on a regular basis to include centers for dramatic play that used more writing and literacy skills, such as a general office, pizza parlor or restaurant, doctor's office, grocery store, or a book store.

As children used the environment, organization and structure was needed in the environment to support the writing and literacy process. Learning centers provide young children with a variety of activities that support various skill levels. Learning centers also provide the time that is needed to fully explore and experiment with the activity. Schickedanz (1986) provides other ways to organize the child's environment through calendars, charts, labels, and signs. The use of these tools in the classroom will support the reading and writing process. Schickedanz also feels children need a variety of books and word-making

materials along with writing centers, book corners, and book-making materials.

The use of varied and interacting activities and materials to support children's writing is very important. Variety keeps the children's interest and the materials provide the aid. Rich (1985) provides a simple idea on promoting children's writing through the use of a writing suitcase. This suitcase filled with paper of all sizes, pencils, markers, crayons, hole punches, and yarn would go home with the child on a given day to develop an interactive writing experience with parent and child. An expansion on the writing suitcase would be to add a stuffed animal to write stories about or a picture that the child could draw or incorporate into a story. The use of variety and a program that provided for skill development of two grades was suggested by Friedman and Koppel (1990). Prekindergarten children worked with first-grade children to form a writing experience together. This experience provided writing and reading skills for both grade levels, along with social skills and the development of a feeling of community.

Description of Selected Solution

The writer gained a variety of ideas from the literature that dovetailed and worked with other solutions in this writer's school and its environment. An important part of solving any problem is to look carefully at what is in place and works at the time; start with what has worked

well and build. The school has a variety of very positive attributes that eased the problem that needed to be solved. Communication has always been open and respected at the school. Teachers share ideas with each other and administrators. The teachers are usually open to try new ideas. The learning-center-based, hands-on approach to education in the early childhood classes adapted easily to an extended writing component. Teachers were providing a program that was developmentally appropriate for young children.

Teachers need to have a better understanding about the development of the child. Along with information on general development of the child, specific information on whole language and the writing process must be given to the teachers. Mills and Clyde (1991) feel that teachers who have a good understanding of child development and have strong beliefs about the literacy process will create children who want to read and write.

Along with understanding the development of the child, teachers must provide an environment that has a variety of print in the room. This, along with a variety of tools for writing and some new ideas for facilitating the writing and language skills, provided the teachers with exciting new challenges for promoting writing. Ideas, such as writing suitcases for children to use, extended dramatic play, learning centers, and interaction with first or second grade

students in a writing project were shared. Children also need the support and interaction between home and school in the attempts to create writing. Parents, in order to support this, must have a clear understanding as to what is happening in school. A portfolio assessment (see Appendix C) for each child with monthly samples of children's work, along with the developmental checklist already used, provided the parent with a better understanding of the child's progress.

The writer was prepared to help teachers incorporate many of the activities and ideas that were suggested. This was done by using the following solution framework:

1. Provide workshops for teachers on child development, whole language, portfolio assessment, and the development of the writing process.

2. Model the use of ideas in the classroom and help organize an extended writing center, writing suitcases, and a variety of other writing activities.

3. Act as a resource and support person as teachers implement new ideas. Help pull items for centers, provide books from library, and work as a liaison between grades to promote writing interaction.

Report of Action Taken

The writer initiated the practicum with a workshop on whole language (see Appendix D) for the prekindergarten teachers. Three teachers were able to take part in the

workshop. The assistants had other duties in the extended day program and were unable to attend. Meetings with the teacher assistants in attendance proved to be a problem throughout the practicum, however, the teachers shared and provided them with much information. All articles on whole language and the writing process were shared with the assistants, and the teachers provided ongoing explanations and modeled whole language and writing process activities.

A miniworkshop (see Appendix E) on the development of the writing process was provided by the writer for the teachers. Much discussion took place on development. Teachers relayed information about children in their classroom and where they thought the child was developmentally, according to the writing process. Teachers expressed concern for the need of large paper, paint, brushes, and other art media in the early years for the development of the writing process. Many other activities connected to writing were discussed and age level appropriateness for activities was stressed. Some of these activities included: labeling of items in the room; learning centers that could be changed and enhanced to incorporate writing; ways to increase children's involvement in literature; how to provide an environment with a lot of print; and ways to enhance the writing procedures, such as writing suitcases and journals. What started out to be a miniworkshop turned into a lengthy discussion with teachers

brainstorming ideas and making plans for activities to do with the children. The teachers were excited and enthusiastic.

The activities provided by the teachers grew as the weeks went by, and the teachers realized how enthusiastic the children were as they participated in new activities. Writing journals, although initiated before the start of the practicum, were re-examined and incorporated into a daily activity. One of the goals of the writer in providing information to the teachers was to help them understand the different developmental stages in writing. The activities of the prekindergarten 3-year-old class may incorporate some of the same activities as the prekindergarten 4-year-olds, but may differ in expectations.

The 3-year-old classroom teachers and assistants provided labels everywhere. Words appeared on blocks, shelves, doors, etc. Pictures in the room were labeled and words were added to flannelboard stories, such as duck for the duck and pig for the pig. The children had daily sign-in sheets where each could write his or her name, letter, or make a mark. Each of the teachers modeled writing the child's name on the front of each drawing or paper. Those children who could write one letter of their name or the whole name were encouraged to do so. The teachers provided a helper chart with the child's picture and his or her name printed next to it. This encouraged children to recognize

all the children's names in the class. A writing center was provided for the prekindergarten 3-year-old class which included markers, many sizes and colors of paper, crayons, a hole punch, and scissors. This writer added to the writing center by providing index cards, an assortment of envelopes, stamps, and a typewriter from the kindergarten class. Items to trace, cardboard and yarn to make books, and magazines and other sources of print were added as the weeks went by. The teacher helped children compose stories about the spring break by taking dictation. The stories were illustrated by the children and were put on a bulletin board. The learning centers in the room provided activities to help prekindergarten 3-year-olds develop writing. The art media was varied. The easel and paint were used everyday, large paper and a variety of tracing activities were provided, play dough and clay activities were an everyday center.

One area that the teachers were reluctant in changing was the housekeeping area. The complaint was that it took a lot of work gathering items. The writer suggested the use of the writing center items to be used in an office. The transformation took place the next day. Discussion took place with the teachers about how new items may be great, but there were many items, if collected in the room, that could create a new dramatic play center. Two weeks later, a toy store appeared and office supplies returned to the writing center. The toy store was complete with play money,

pads of paper and pencils for ordering, old checkbooks, and credit cards; the latter supplied by parents. Each toy was labeled by name and the amount it was for sale. Telephones and telephone books were added and the week went by; brown paper bags and a toy cash register extended the play.

Prekindergarten 4-Year-Olds

The prekindergarten 4-year-old teacher provided sign-in sheets for the children on a daily basis. The room had been labeled, but new words were added to such items as the computer, typewriter, and bulletin board. Children's names were put by the bathroom door. The writing center was expanded. An activity started by the teacher grew to include all the children and the writer. The teacher wrote notes, small pieces of paper with words, and buried them in the sand table. The children eagerly found the notes to read. They wanted to write notes and bury them. After several days of this, the teacher suggested the children write a note to the writer in he. office. Many notes arrived. The writer wrote back to the children on a regular basis. The prekindergarten 4-year-old teachers increased print in the room in all areas. Telephone books and cookbooks were put in the housekeeping corner, newspapers were brought in, and newspaper headlines were cut up to compose sentences. Children were busy dictating stories to the teachers; and, at the end of the year, many were

encouraged to write words phonetically to make up their own stories.

Learning centers included many activities for writing. The housekeeping corner was enriched with telephone books, magazines, newspapers, cookbooks, and pads of paper to take telephone messages. Several old briefcases were brought in and stocked with paper, pencils, and calculators.

The prekindergarten 4-year-olds participated with students in a second-grade class in a book buddies activity. A second-grade student buddied with a 4-year-old and read the younger child a story. Afterwards, the two children would compose a short story; the second grader wrote the words and the 4-year-old illustrated the story. This became an ongoing project with the second-grade students coming to the 4-year-old classroom about once a week.

The writer checked lesson plan books on a weekly basis and throughout the implementation made daily visits to the classroom. Research articles on development of writing and literacy activities were shared with the staff. Meetings with teachers were held on an informal basis. One activity that was changed from the original plan was the modeling of writing and whole language activities by the writer. This activity was unnecessary as the teachers provided many book-making activities. The writer did not encounter roadblocks implementing this practicum. The teachers were enthusiastic

and provided a variety of expanded writing activities for the children.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The problem addressed in the practicum was that the prekindergarten children were not provided with a variety of writing experiences based on their level of development. The solution strategy selected by the writer involved providing workshops for teachers on the development of writing and whole language. These strategies included formal and informal meetings with teachers. The goals of the workshops were to impart knowledge and develop understanding and enthusiasm for the development of the writing process in children. Other strategies included support and help in organizing centers and sharing of research articles on the writing process.

Results

A 50% increase in the amount of print in the classroom was expected. Each classroom did increase the amount of print by 50%. This was evident by the author's weekly checking of lesson plans prepared by teachers and classroom observations.

Table 3

Post-Implementation Checklist of Activities and Supplies Used in Learning Centers

Learning Center	Teachers A	B	C
BLOCKS			
paper/markers		x	x
symbols	x	x	x
signs		x	x
HOUSEKEEPING			
mag/newspaper		x	x
paper/marker			x
evirn. print	x	x	x
area changed	x	x	x
WRITING CENTER			
paper /markers	x	x	x
typewriter			x
stories	x	x	x
rich in print		x	x
art/variety	x	x	x
write name		x	x

Additional learning centers that provided activities for the literacy and writing process increased by 50% in all rooms. This was reflected by the observational checklist and through the writer's observation.

Inquiries from parents about whole language and the writing process did decrease. This was difficult to reasure as the measurement tool, providing the parents with a portfolio of children's work along with a parent-teacher conference, was not finalized. A workshop on portfolio assessment was provided (Appendix F). The teachers did

gather samples of the children's writings and drawings; however, due to the lack of time, and the end-of-school activities, the portfolios were not shared with the parents at a conference. The children did take home the portfolios at the need of the school year. The decrease of inquiries from parents perhaps was caused by the excited and enthusiastic communication of the teachers and children about the writing activities.

Discussion

The goal of the practicum was to increase children's writing opportunities through teacher development and education. The evaluation data showed a 50% increase in print in the room and a 50% increase in writing activities provided for children.

The writer's outcomes were clearly met. The enthusiasm of the teachers to provide a variety of writing and literacy based activities certainly indicated this. Through the workshops model of education, teachers gained valuable child development information. With this information, brainstorming on activities to promote the writing development took place. A prekindergarten 4-year-old teacher said, "I really never saw the writing procedure tied developmentally to language and reading." Most teachers agreed the workshops encouraged them to think about the sequential development of children.

The journal was an excellent tool for recording everyday happenings and activities and unexpected events. Several unexpected events happened over the course of implementation. The kindergarten teachers who were not included in implementation expressed great interest in the research of the writing process. Articles and ideas were shared with the kindergarten team, and the kindergarten team met with the prekindergarten team and discussed activities provided in kindergarten for writing. A second unexpected interest took place when the writer shared writing journal sample activities and research articles with the middle school English teacher. The teacher is responsible for the writing curriculum for the entire school. It had not included prekindergarten. The final unexpected event took place as two teachers went to a workshop on the use of portfolios as an assessment tool. Upon return, the teachers provided a schoolwide workshop on the use of portfolios (see Appendix F). The workshop was a great fit with the writer and prekindergarten teachers for implementation of this practicum.

Recommendations

The writer recommends the following suggestions for furthering solutions to the problem of increasing children's writing opportunities with teacher education:

1. Provide an ongoing inservice training session for teachers on literacy and writing process.

2. Incorporate all staff from prekindergarten through first grade.
3. Provide for informal meetings so teachers can plan and brainstorm on a cross-grade level.
4. Write prekindergarten curriculum and incorporate it in the schoolwide writing curriculum.
5. Continue to work with teachers on the development of portfolios as an assessment tool.

Dissemination

The kindergarten team has requested a copy of the writer's practicum. Along with the kindergarten team, inservice training on the writing process will be provided for the first-grade team of teachers. Writing curriculum must be developed to include the prekindergarten age child, and the writer plans on using the practicum as a springboard for this activity. The writer would also like to write an article for publication in Young Children, a magazine published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

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APPENDICES

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX A

TEACHER SURVEY ON WORKSHOPS

APPENDIX A

TEACHER SURVEY ON WORKSHOPS

As the staff prepares inservice and workshops for the coming year, please take a few minutes to share with us some of your needs and interests. Below are some possible workshop topics. Please rate them by your degree of interest. If you have an interest that is not listed, add it to the bottom of the page.

PLEASE RATE THESE WITH:	1	MOST INTERESTED
	2	INTERESTED
	3	NOT INTERESTED

	Rating
1. Classroom management	_____
2. Music for preschoolers	_____
3. Art for preschoolers	_____
4. Woodworking	_____
5. Self-esteem	_____
6. Whole language and the writing process	_____
7. Child development - ages and stages	_____
8. Math concepts for preschool	_____
9. Science and early childhood	_____
10. Math/Science integrated with whole language	_____

APPENDIX B

OBSERVATION OF PREKINDERGARTEN WRITING AND PRINT ENVIRONMENT

APPENDIX B

OBSERVATION OF PREKINDERGARTEN WRITING AND PRINT ENVIRONMENT

Date: _____
Room: _____

1. BLOCK AREA:

___ Paper and markers were available to make signs.

___ Blocks were arranged with shape symbol.

___ Signs are available for use with block construction.

2. HOME ENVIRONMENT AREA:

___ Magazine and newspapers are available in the home environment corner.

___ Paper and markers available for grocery or other lists.

___ Area is changed on a regular basis throughout the year to provide extended play and writing activities (office, pizza parlor, hospital).

___ Boxes and cans from real food items are used in play corner.

3. WRITING CENTER:

___ Paper, markers, hole punches, etc. are provided on a daily basis.

___ Items are fully assessable to child.

___ Typewriter is available to children.

___ Samples of words and shapes are available to trace.

APPENDIX B

4. ___ Stories are told and books are read on a daily basis.

5. ___ The environment is rich in print.
___ Labels on equipment.
___ Daily news types of charts used.
___ Teacher models writing with children.
___ Birthday lists or charts on wall.
___ Newspapers, magazines, and other forms of print materials are brought into classroom.

6. ___ Children have many opportunities with a variety of art media.

7. ___ Children are encouraged to write their name on their own papers.

APPENDIX C

PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST

APPENDIX C

PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST

Beginning of school year:

- picture of person
- name
- journal entry

Middle of school year:

- writing sample
- developmental checklist already in place

End of year:

- picture of person
- name
- writing sample
- journal entry
- developmental checklist
- short narrative summary of child's development

APPENDIX D

WORKSHOP ON WHOLE LANGUAGE

APPENDIX D

WORKSHOP ON WHOLE LANGUAGE

I. What is whole language?

A. Whole language is a process that involves children learning about language as they use it in meaningful ways to them.

1. reading
2. writing
3. speaking
4. listening

B. A literature base approach to reading and prereading.

C. Thematic units are organized around flexible learning centers.

D. Children involved in planning and solving problems.

E. A wide range of assessable materials that involve children in language functions.

II. What is not consistent with whole language?

A. Use of dittos.

B. Drills on formation of letters.

C. Practice of isolated letters.

D. Basal readers and workbooks.

E. Heavy teacher lecturing.

APPENDIX D

III. Important to set up environment where children can feel free to express themselves.

A. Give opportunities for real choices.

B. Listen actively.

C. Encourage questions.

D. Let children solve problems.

E. Set up situations for voluntary speaking rather than mandatory.

IV. Look at the environment.

A. Use centers.

B. Provide a print-rich environment.

1. Label everything.
2. Use experience charts.
3. Bring in things that have print on them.
4. Use and make sentence strips.
5. Fill centers with printed items, such as telephone books, maps, recipe books, etc.

C. Provide rich literature experiences.

1. Read quality children's literature to children, including Caldcott and Newbury award winners.
2. Tell stories to children.
3. Use finger plays, rhymes, and poems.
4. Act out stories.

APPENDIX D

5. Provide listening stations.
6. Use puppets.
7. Integrate stories into other areas of curriculum like math and science.

D. Model reading and writing.
   1. Let children see you read and older children reading.
   2. Write lots of notes, thank you's, good day or happy face notes with the children.
   3. Before open houses, help children make a list of what they want their parents to see.

E. Provide activities that promote whole language.
   1. Make all kinds of books.
   2. Use a sign-in sheet.
   3. Keep journals.
   4. Provide a specific writing center:
      a. paper, pencils, markers, and chalk
      b. old greeting cards
      c. envelopes
      d. book-making supplies
      e. computer
      f. typewriter

APPENDIX D

V. Whole language is integrating reading, writing, listening, and speaking into all areas of the curriculum.

VI. Whole language is:

A. Exciting to teacher and child.

B. Inexpensive to use.

C. Center based.

D. Child oriented - teacher as facilitator.

E. Planned, but flexible.

F. It works.

APPENDIX E

MINIWORKSHOP ON DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING

APPENDIX E

MINIWORKSHOP ON DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING

I. Children start to develop writing from infancy.
   - A. Gestures
   - B. Speech
   - C. Play
   - D. Drawing

II. Young children develop general concepts about how to write.
   - A. Two-year-olds scribble for pleasure.
   - B. Threes draw wavy lines or series of circles.
   - C. Three to five-year-old children vary their patterns and produce a mixture of real letters, symbols, and mock letters.

III. Children who are in the scribbling stage of writing and the mixture stage need to see adults writing several times a day.
   - A. Be a public writer.
     1. spell out loud
     2. describe how to form letters.
   - B. Take dictation.
   - C. Use experience charts.
   - D. Provide private notes to children to model writing.

APPENDIX E

E. Use children's names.

1. Model needs to be always available if child can write it.

2. Ways to have children write name in classroom.

a. waiting for turn

b. checking out book

c. taking roll

d. making choices

e. record keeping

f. author/artist

IV. Functional print belongs in the classroom.

A. Signs

B. Labels

C. Tickets

D. Cards or birthday banner

E. Thank you's

F. Advertizement

G. Books of all kinds

V. Writing is a process.

A. It is developmental.

B. It is sequential.

C. It needs lots of practice, time, and support.

APPENDIX F

WORKSHOP ON PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

Provided by: Lynn Edgar, Third-Grade Teacher
Lynn Beer, Middle School Teacher

APPENDIX F

WORKSHOP ON PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

- A portfolio tells a story
- Formative assessment gives students feedback about what's expected.
- Product vs. process - which is more important
- Portfolio work kept for a purpose
- Shows growth
- Design of program - people involved in use should be in on design process
- 8 items in a portfolio
  - various work in stages
  - work that shows growth
  - student reflections/teacher evaluation
  - variety of mediums
  - variety of writing
  - collaborative work
  - table of contents
  - conference notes
- A portfolio tells:
  - How students are earning
  - Where students are - what they are learning and why
  - If students can argue, analyze, criticize, use higher level thinking skills
  - About individual needs
- To begin:
  - Start small - select a few pieces
  - Link to daily instruction
  - Give student responsibility and accessibility
  - Keep parents involved
  - Define and develop objectives that meet classroom needs